



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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April 8, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM:

Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **LATINO FAMILY INSTITUTE, INC. CONTRACT REVIEW - A
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER
FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Latino Family Institute, Inc. (Latino Family or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Latino Family, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Latino Family is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 11 certified foster homes in which 25 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Latino Family is located in the Third and Fifth Districts.

DCFS paid Latino Family a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau.

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"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Based on the child's age, Latino Family received between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency paid the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. Latino Family was paid approximately \$352,000 during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Latino Family was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed the Agency's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed the children and the foster parents.

Results of Review

The two foster homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Latino Family generally met their expectations, and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The staff working on the County contract at Latino Family possessed the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations. Latino Family also ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Latino Family needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

- None of the two homes visited adequately secured kitchen knives or in one home a bottle of wine. Our prior monitoring report also noted that Latino Family did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.
- The DCFS social worker did not approve four of the five Needs and Services Plans reviewed as required.
- Latino Family social workers did not make three of the five children's required home visits within the required timeframes. The County contract requires social workers to visit children twice a month, approximately 14 days apart, after the child has been placed in the home over three months. We noted two instances where the children's visits were 25 and 21 days apart, respectively.
- Four of the five case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children or the DCFS social workers were informed about the Agency's policies regarding discipline, complaints, discharge and house rules. Our prior audit review also noted that Latino Family did not ensure that children or their DCFS social workers were informed about all the Agency's policies.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Latino Family on September 16, 2008. In their attached response, Latino Family indicates agreement with our findings and the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Latino Family for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:DC:AA

Attachment

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Jorge Amendariz, Chair, Board of Directors, Latino Family Institute, Inc.
Maria L. Quintanilla, Executive Director, Latino Family Institute, Inc.
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
LATINO FAMILY INSTITUTE, INC.
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008**

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Latino Family Institute, Inc. (Latino Family or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited two Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Latino Family billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in January and February 2008, and interviewed three foster parents and three foster children, and observed one toddler placed in the four homes. We also reviewed the case files for four foster parents and five children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Latino Family met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The toddler we observed appeared to be well cared for and happy. Latino Family's social workers also visited the children the required number of times and appropriately documented the visits in the case files. However, Latino Family did not always comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Specifically:

Foster Home Visitation

None of the two homes visited adequately secured kitchen knives or in one home a bottle of wine. In addition, one of the two homes stored vitamins unlocked in the kitchen cupboard. Immediately after the home visitations, the foster parents adequately secured the kitchen knives and the vitamins in a locked cabinet and discarded the bottle of wine. Our prior monitoring report also noted that Latino Family did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports

- The DCFS social worker did not approve four (80%) of the five Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) reviewed as required. Latino Family sent the four NSPs to the DCFS social workers for approval. However, the Agency did not follow-up with the social workers when the approvals were not obtained.

- One (33%) of the three Termination Reports reviewed was not prepared within the required timeframes. The report was approximately three months late.

Children's Records

- Three (60%) of the five children's required home visits were not made within the required timeframes. The County contract requires Latino Family social workers to visit children twice a month, approximately 14 days apart, after the child has been placed in the home over three months. We noted two instances where the children's visits were 25 and 21 days apart, respectively.
- Four (80%) of the five case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children or the DCFS social workers were informed about the Agency's policies regarding discipline, complaints, discharge and house rules. Our prior audit review also noted that Latino Family did not ensure that children or their DCFS social workers were informed about all the Agency's policies.

Recommendations

Latino Family management ensure:

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
2. **Foster parents adequately secure knives, alcoholic beverages and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the children.**
3. **DCFS social workers approve Needs and Services Plans as required.**
4. **Termination Reports are prepared within the required timeframes.**
5. **Children are visited twice a month, approximately 14 days apart, after the first three months of placement by the Agency's social workers.**
6. **Children and the DCFS social workers receive a comprehensive overview of the Agency's policies.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Latino Family billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed four children and observed one toddler placed in two Latino Family certified foster homes and interviewed three foster parents to confirm the services Latino Family billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met or exceeded their expectations, and the foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The toddler also appeared to be well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Latino Family social workers' caseloads do not exceed fifteen placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Latino Family's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Overall, Latino Family's four social workers carried an average caseload of six cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of four social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Latino Family staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In

addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Latino Family's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Latino Family's administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Latino Family conducted the required hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the prior monitoring review completed by the Auditor-Controller.

Verification

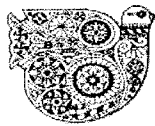
We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on November 23, 2005.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained two outstanding recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 1 and 6 contained in this report were also noted in the prior monitoring review.

Recommendation

- 7. Latino Family management implement the two outstanding recommendations from the prior monitoring report.**



Latino Family Institute, Inc.

September 30, 2008

TO: Wendy L. Watanabe
Acting Auditor Controller

C: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zen Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Maria L. Quintanilla, LCSW
Executive Director

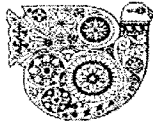
SUBJECT: Latino Family institute Foster Family Agency Contract Review

Pursuant to your review, this letter is in response to the audit recommendations stated in your contract compliance review. Listed below is each of the recommendations followed by our corrective actions.

Recommendations and Responses:

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 Regulations.** During monthly group supervision, the workers are regularly reminded to be vigilant as they visit their assigned foster homes. Workers are further required to routinely review home inspections guidelines with their families to ensure compliance with Title 22 Regulations.
2. **Foster parents adequately secure knives, alcohol and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to the kids.** These corrections noted above were made immediately following the Auditor-Controllers' visit to the homes. Furthermore, LFI social workers and case managers were retrained in this area on 5/6/08, 6/3/08 and 9/9/08.
3. **NSPs are approved by the DCFS social worker as required.** Since the Auditor-Controllers' review, Program Manager Virginia Olivas, MSW, created and implemented an in-house LFI form which clearly delineates and documents four efforts to obtain county social workers' signatures. During the Exit Interview with the Auditor-Controller, Ms. Cassandra Youngblood reviewed the form and agreed that this form would serve as an appropriate tracking method.

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Latino Family Institute, Inc.

4. **Termination Reports are prepared within the required timeframes.** During monthly group supervision on 5/6/08 and 6/3/08, the social workers were reminded of the importance of timeliness in regards to termination reports. Program Manager Olivas distributes monthly lists of reports that are to be submitted during each month. This tracking method is expected to further promote timeliness in regard to the submission of said reports.
5. **Children are visited twice a month, approximately 14 days apart, after the first three months of placement by the Agency's social workers.** During monthly group supervision on 5/6/08 and 6/3/08, LFI social workers were trained with regard to visitation timetables.
6. **Children and the DCFS social workers receive a comprehensive overview of the Agency's policies.** Program Manager Olivas has redesigned a comprehensive form outlining LFI's policies and procedures, particularly as they relate to Grievance Procedure, Discharge Policies, House Rules and Discipline Policy. These policies and procedures will be signed by the foster child, the foster parent, the county social worker, and an LFI social worker.
7. **Latino Family management implement the two outstanding recommendations from the prior monitoring report.** The prior monitoring report contained two outstanding recommendations related to recommendations 1 and 6 above. As previously stated, LFI social workers are now receiving regular trainings and meeting monthly to review and ensure compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 Regulations.

In terms of recommendation 6, following the Auditor-Controller's 2005 Review, LFI began obtaining county social worker and child/youth signatures on Children's Personal Rights, Initial Clothing Allowances, Ambulatory Status, and FFA Placement Agreements. As a result of this most recent review, LFI will now include a comprehensive LFI Policies and Procedures to be signed by the foster child, the foster parent, the county social worker, and an LFI social worker.

I appreciate your continued collaborative partnership and honest feedback to improve program services.

Respectfully,

Maria L. Quintanilla, LCSW
Executive Director